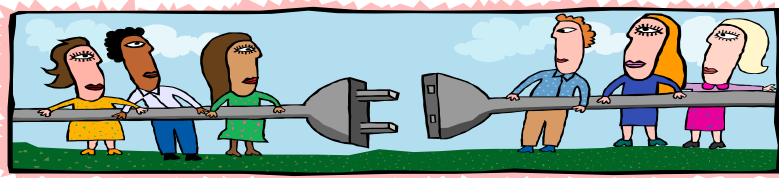


Consumer Connection



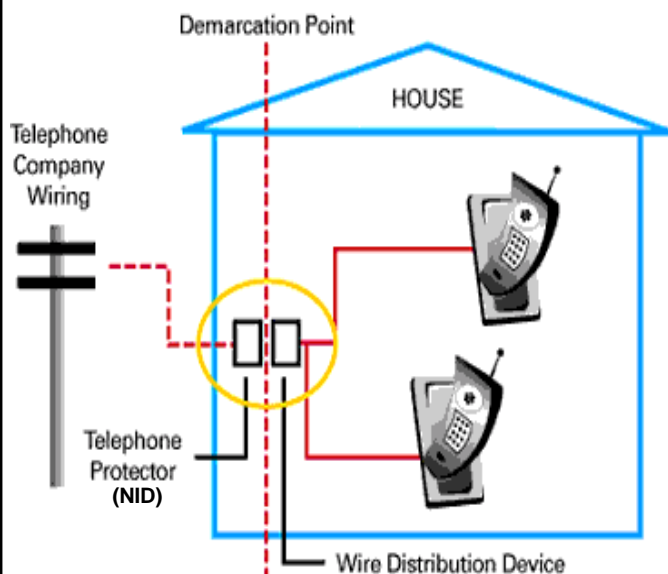
Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century

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Inside Wire -- Where does the responsibility end?

Since telephone industry deregulation in 1996, consumers have been faced with many decisions on phone service, installation and equipment. **Who fixes what??** Many phone companies offer maintenance contracts for a monthly fee which will cover the cost of fixing your phone whether it's inside or outside your home.



If you choose not to subscribe to a plan, you may be charged a trip charge **PLUS** another charge for actually fixing your phone if the problem is found to be your inside wiring (wiring inside your home). If you think you may have a problem, there are some things you can do first, before calling the phone company.

- > Check all the phones in your home for a receiver accidentally left off the hook.
- > Make sure the phone you are using is plugged securely into the wall outlet.
- > If you have an answering machine or modem, disconnect it to see if the line clears.
- > If your telephones are modular (plug in and out of the outlet), and you have more than one phone, try unplugging one phone at a time to see if the trouble clears.

> If you have more than one phone, try both phones -- one of them could be bad. If the problem occurs on both phones, the problem could be in your inside wire or the telephone company's equipment.

Your home is equipped with a protection device to help guard against electrical interferences such as lightning or downed power lines. This protector, commonly called the Network Interface Device (NID), also can be used to test your telephone line to determine where the trouble is located. The NID is usually a gray box about three inches square and is located on the outside of the house, usually near the electric meter. The device will be marked, indicating that it is telephone company equipment.



If your NID is capable of being used to test telephones, it will have a snap open front cover, or will require a straight-bladed (slotted tip) screwdriver to open. Instructions will be printed inside.

If the device has a plastic hex nut recessed on the front cover and that is the only way to access the device, **DO NOT** loosen the hex nut. The device **IS NOT CAPABLE** of being used to test your telephone and should not be opened.

You can test your telephone line at the NID by following these steps:

If the NID has snap-open front cover or can be opened with a straight-bladed (slotted tip) screwdriver, open it and locate the cord inside. (The cord will look similar to the one on the base of your modular telephone.)

Unplug the cord inside the NID, and insert the base cord from your modular telephone.

If you **CAN HEAR DIAL TONE**, the telephone set and the telephone line are working.

REMEMBER: "Inside" wire starts from the box. The wire may run directly into your home, or it may run on the outside from the box to its entry point into your home. The demarcation point is FROM THE BOX.



CARELESS DIALING COULD COST YOU MONEY

When placing collect or operator-assisted calls, there are some things you need to know.

If you misdial you may be connected to a carrier who charges two or three times more than the carrier you intended to reach. For example, you place a collect call from a public phone or payphone, intending to use a service like 1-800-CALL-ATT or 1-800-COLLECT. But -- you misspell or hit an incorrect button when dialing. You accidentally dial something like 1-800-CALLLAT. You get connected to your party, but the phone company that connects you is not the one you thought you were using. Instead, it is a company that secured 800 numbers similar to well-known ones (i.e., a company secures the number "800-CALLLAT"). The company is banking on the possibility that you might accidentally misdial your intended number. Often the company won't identify itself to you or the person receiving the collect call before connecting the call.

SURPRISE!! The charge for the misdialed call is two to three times higher than it would have been had you reached the carrier you intended to use.

CALLERS PLACING COLLECT CALLS:

Dial carefully
Listen carefully

RECEIVERS OF COLLECT CALLS:

Listen carefully
Review phone bills carefully

If you suspect you are a victim of this scheme, first contact the phone company that charged you for the call. If you need additional assistance, you can file a complaint with the FCC by email (fccinfo@fcc.gov), the internet (www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html), telephone 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), voice 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY or mail FCC, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554.

Source: Federal Communications Commission

What To Do If You Are Moving Or Changing Service



Call your electric, natural gas, sewer, water, local and long distance telephone companies and request termination of your service at a specific location on a specific date. Keep a record of the date, time and person(s) you talked to at the company. While it is not required, you may want to contact the company several weeks before you move.



Call the electric, natural gas, water and sewer companies and request a final reading of your meter(s) to make sure your final bill(s) is based on an actual, not estimated, meter reading. You should provide the utility company with your forwarding address.



Schedule a time to allow the utility representative to obtain the final or actual usage reading from your meter(s) that are inside or outside of your home or business. It is the customer's responsibility to provide access to the meter(s) for a final reading.



Before you move, contact the companies that provide service for the new location and make sure a final meter reading was taken for the previous occupant. Deposits, plus interest, are generally applied to the final bill so any credit balance remaining is refunded to the consumer.



Contact your local and long distance telephone companies and set up your accounts and calling plans for your new location. Remember, there may be fees for setting up new lines.

If you switch long distance companies or calling plans, contact the new company to verify that the change is in effect. If you have several phone lines in your home or business, confirm that the switch has been made on all the lines. Also, contact your previous carrier to verify your account has been closed to avoid any monthly or minimal billings.

If An Account Or Bill Is In Your Name, It's Your Responsibility

Do not rely on others to take utility service out of your name. You will be responsible for an account that has not been closed. Don't forget to contact all utility companies that provide you service.

For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-751-7491 or email joyceneuner@psc.state.mo.us

Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**
or email: pscinfo@psc.state.mo.us

Mail your inquiry or complaint to:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Services Department
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360

